

THIS REVISED CHAPTER WAS APPROVED BY THE
WAUKESHA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON MARCH 23, 2004

NOTE: Pages 439-a through 439-cc replace the original text of Chapter XIII on pages 439 through 491 of this document. All maps and tables in the original chapter are still valid.

Chapter XIII

PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The recommended new park and open space plan for Waukesha County is presented in this chapter. The new plan consists of both an area wide outdoor recreation element and an open space preservation element, intended to provide, respectively, resource-oriented recreational sites and facilities and the protection of areas containing important natural resources. The plan is intended to assist the Waukesha County Department of Parks and Land Use-Parks System Division in attaining their vision. The vision is to be a natural resource based park system which demonstrates environmental stewardship while providing recreational, cultural, and educational opportunities.

It is intended that the County park and open space plan meet State planning requirements for the State outdoor recreation aids program, thereby making the County eligible to apply for, and receive, available State and Federal funds to assist in the acquisition and development of recommended park and open space sites and facilities. To this end, recommendations regarding implementation responsibilities and plan implementation costs for County park and open space sites are included in this chapter.

Sites and facilities for intensive nonresource-oriented recreational facilities are typically provided by city, village, and urban town units of government and are therefore not specifically addressed in this plan. Recommendations for the provision of local park sites and facilities should be identified through the preparation, within the framework of the County plan, of local park and open space plans by the individual communities concerned. Accordingly, it is not intended that the County plan serve as the park and open space plan for the individual urban local units of government within the County. The County plan should, however, assist rural towns that adopt the County

plan to qualify for available Federal and State grant-in-aid in support of the development of town park and associated recreation facilities.

The plan outlines the park and open space facilities needed to serve the resident County population anticipated under full development of the County land use plan. The plan also presents recommendations related to park and open space facilities that would be needed to serve the resident population of the County anticipated under the year 2010 stage of the County land use plan. The plan is sufficiently detailed to provide a sound basis for short-term planning and programming by the responsible County officials.

Inventory data needed for the preparation of the park and open space plan are provided in earlier chapters of this report. Such data include historic and existing resident population and household levels, presented in Chapter II; projected resident population and household levels, presented in Chapter VIII; the existing land use pattern, presented in Chapter IV; the planned land use pattern, presented in Chapter X; and the location and extent of environmental corridors, natural areas, floodlands, and other important natural resources and natural resource-related elements, presented in Chapter III. These data were carefully considered and used in the preparation of the park and open space plan documented in this chapter.

Regional Park and Open Space Plan

The first park and open space plan for Waukesha County was an integral part of the first regional park and open space plan,¹ adopted by the Regional Planning Commission on December 1, 1977. That plan identified existing and probable future park and open space needs within the Region and

¹See *SEWRPC Planning Report No. 27, A Regional Park and Open Space Plan for South-eastern Wisconsin: 1977.*

recommended a park system consisting of large resource-oriented parks and smaller nonresource-oriented urban parks, together with attendant recreational facilities. The regional park and open space plan also recommended the development of a network of hiking and bicycling trails within natural resource corridors of regional significance, including the Kettle Moraine area of Waukesha County and the riverine areas of the Fox River and its major tributaries. The regional park and open space plan further recommended that primary environmental corridors and prime agricultural lands be preserved in order to sustain the natural resource base and the environmental quality of the Region.

Year 2000 Waukesha County Park and Open Space Plan

In 1984, the Waukesha County Park and Planning Commission requested that the Regional Planning Commission assist the County in refining and updating the regional park and open space plan as it applied to Waukesha County. The resulting plan is documented in SEWRPC Community Assistance Planning Report No. 137, A Park and Open Space Plan for Waukesha County, December 1989. That plan, which has a design year of 2000, was adopted by the Waukesha County Board of Supervisors on February 20, 1990, and by the Regional Planning Commission on March 7, 1990. The year 2000 plan is graphically summarized on Map 67 in Chapter VI of this report.

The year 2000 County park and open space plan recommends the acquisition of four additional park sites by Waukesha County; the expansion of five existing County parks; and continued development of eight other County parks for such resource-oriented recreational uses as swimming, golfing, picnicking, and hiking. The plan recommends the protection of primary environmental corridors and, more specifically, that the County acquire primary environmental corridors lying adjacent to the rivers and major streams in the County. The plan recommends the development of 11 recreational trails within the County and the development of four lake-access sites and two canoe-access points on the Fox River. The plan also contained recommendations for acquisition of additional natural areas by the Department of Natural Resources. A summary of the implementation status of the year 2000 plan is provided in Table 148.

EXISTING PARK AND OPEN SPACE SITES

Waukesha County Park and Open Space Sites and Facilities

In 1995, the Waukesha County park system consisted of 35 sites,² encompassing about 5,920 acres, or about 1.6 percent of the total area of the County. The 35 County sites include 12 major parks,³ encompassing about 3,675 acres; seven other park or open space sites, encompassing about 440 acres; 11 parkway sites, encompassing about 1,410 acres;⁴ two lake-access sites, encompassing about 20 acres; and three County recreation trails, encompassing about 375 acres.⁵ Together, lands under easement or lease agreement with the County for open space or recreational trail purposes accounted for 289 acres, or 5 percent, of the 5,920 acres of County park and open space lands.

County park and open space sites owned in 1995, other than trails, are shown on Map 97. Trails are shown on Map 98. County park and open space sites are listed on Table 149.

Major County Parks: Major county parks are well distributed throughout the County and provide a variety of outdoor recreation facilities. Selected

²The County also owns the grounds of the University of Wisconsin-Waukesha campus. The site, which is operated by the State of Wisconsin, currently provides facilities for certain nonresource-oriented recreational activities, specifically, tennis and soccer.

³Major parks are defined as large, publicly owned outdoor recreation sites containing significant natural resource amenities which provide opportunities for such resource-oriented activities as camping, golfing, picnicking, and swimming. Major parks include both Type I, or regional parks, with an area of 250 acres or more, and Type II, or multi-community parks, with an area of between 100 and 250 acres.

⁴Includes about 1,245 acres owned by Waukesha County and about 165 acres under conservation easement to Waukesha County.

⁵Of the three County trails, one, the Bugline trail, is located on right-of-way owned by the County, and two, the Lake Country and New Berlin trails, are located on Wisconsin Electric Power Company rights-of-way leased to the County for trail purposes. The Bugline trail right-of-way and adjacent County-owned parcels encompass about 250 acres. The rights-of-way under lease agreement for the Lake Country and New Berlin trails encompass about 53 acres and 73 acres, respectively.